

# Many Valley executives find advantages in telecommuting

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Telecommuting has become a trendy way for workers to save a little gas and the environment. Now executives are getting in on the act, and Phoenix is benefiting.

The Valley is becoming a place where executives look to set up a home base and travel for work, or where companies establish a headquarters with executive staff only and have manufacturing plants scattered throughout the country or the world.

It has appeal from the corporate standpoint of using technology to mitigate travel costs. It also expands the ability to recruit executives who like the Phoenix area for what it has to offer, but feel a job elsewhere might be too good to pass up.

"There would have to be a heck of a job for me to leave Phoenix," said Mark Wood, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Actronix Inc.

Actronix is a Flippin, Ark.-based company that for more than 30 years has built customized wiring assemblies for various technology-related fields, including telecommunications and medical applications. A few years ago, when it was in danger of going out of business, CEO Tim Grant was brought in to turn the company around.

Grant contacted Wood and Tom Brunell to work as consultants, which worked well for the two men who lived in Phoenix.

What has evolved over the past four years continues to have several of the company's executives running the company from afar. Grant works and lives in San Diego. Brunell, now the company's vice president of supply chains and logistics, lives in the East Valley.

"We didn't start down this path with the idea of being virtual managers," Brunell said. "It's evolved into the way we work."

Other companies, such as wind turbine blade manufacturer TPI Composites LLC in Scottsdale, have staffs of between 10 and 20 executives in the Valley.

President and CEO Steven Lockard, a Valley resident for more than 20 years, went to work for TPI in its original home of Warren, R.I. The company still operates a fabrication plant there, but its executives now are together here, using technology and travel to be where they need to be.

Phoenix offers advantages for TPI because the area's amenities can be used to recruit executives and because it offers easy and efficient transit via Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The company uses the Web, videoconferencing, cell phones and e-mail to stay in contact with its facilities, which range from Iowa to Mexico to China.

Technology has made it easier to operate virtual headquarters, said Brian Murphy, managing director of Point B. His consulting firm operates in Phoenix and seven other markets through virtual connections.

The move toward executive telecommuting has become more noticeable in the Valley during the past couple of years, Murphy said.

For some companies, allowing executives to work outside the office is about keeping the right people, said Sara Fell, CEO of Flexjobs.com, an Internet job board with employees spread from New York to California helping people find flexible jobs.

"The jobs do exist, and with companies needing more cost savings, it can become an option," she said.

Wood and Brunell said their system evolved while they were consulting and after they took on full-time roles. Being away from the office meant it took longer to get to know the employees and longer to build relationships.

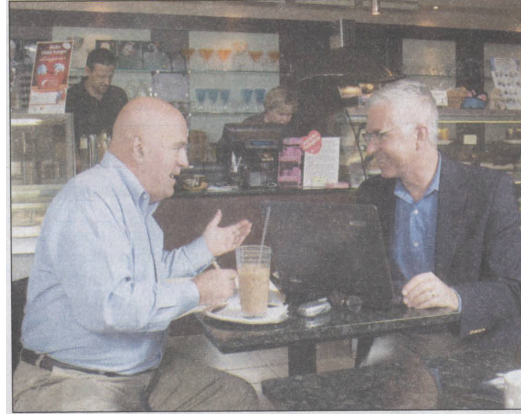
The two spend a lot of time on the phone with their employees.

"You find new and different ways to communicate," Brunell said.

Actronix Inc.: [www.actronixinc.com](http://www.actronixinc.com)

TPI Composites LLC: [www.tpicomposites.com](http://www.tpicomposites.com)

Point B: [www.pointb.com](http://www.pointb.com)



Tom Brunell, left, vice president of supply chain logistics for Actronix Inc., and Mark Wood, the company's senior vice president of sales and marketing, work from offices in Phoenix instead of the company's facilities in Arkansas.

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